

10 WAYS TO KNOW YOU'RE BECOMING A STRONGER PRESENTER

By **Sam Harrison**
Speaker and Author



How good of a presenter are you? Hard to gauge, isn't it? Other than any direct feedback we receive from audiences, it's difficult to know if our speaking skills are becoming better, staying the same or, getting worse. Below are ten ways to know if your speaking skills are strong, and to help you improve your presentation skills.

1. You understand your audience

You take time to know the people and organization – and you align your content to meet their wants, needs, and dreams.

2. You practice

You prep like a pro. Sometimes you rehearse alone, other times in front of a friend or a video camera to get honest feedback. But you never try winging it.

3. You check the room in advance

You familiarize yourself with the space prior to your presentation, and you're aware of (and have possibly dealt with) any problems or distractions in the room.

4. Your visuals support your words, rather than duplicating them

You avoid slides or charts packed with bullet points. Instead, your visuals are a few simple words or images that quickly reinforce what you're saying.

5. You don't do data dumps

Rather than numbing audience members with nonstop facts and figures, you inject liberal doses of vivid examples and human-interest stories that paint pictures.

6. Your presentation flows

You stay focused on the overall theme of your presentation and move seamlessly from one point to the next. You work hard to make it look easy.

7. You pace yourself

You don't speak too fast or too slow. You modulate your voice so it doesn't become monotone and listless. And you use occasional pauses to catch your breath – and to give your audience a chance to mentally catch up.

8. You offer the best version of yourself

You're comfortable with your own personality and style – but you always bring your top game. You watch posture and body language to be sure you're not overly casual or unprofessional in the process of being yourself.

9. You lean into your audience

You talk with your audience and not at them. You project energy, make eye contact, ask questions, and in other ways connect on a personal level with audience members.

10. You show passion

You know that when you speak, you're trying to sell yourself and your ideas – and that selling is a transfer of passion and enthusiasm.

Sam Harrison is an in-demand speaker on creativity-related topics and presentation skills. Sam is the author of IdeaSelling, IdeaSpotting, and Zing. He can be reached at www.zingzone.com. This article first appeared in HOW Magazine. ★